

The Brethren Evangelist,

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SOME WORK FOR OUR NATIONAL CONFERENCE.

The care of the churches.—No fact in New Testament Church polity forces itself so strenuously upon us as that of the care of the churches. Most intimately connected with the great commission—"Go, teach,"—are those other words of Jesus—"Feed my sheep; feed my lambs." Herein lies the continued growth of the church. To sustain by careful supervision and real earnest teaching; to maintain the conditions of spiritual life; and to have *every church* or class, large or small, *cared for*, alone assures the continued success of the church.

This point it seems to me needs no argument. The many places where a local church was organized after a successful meeting and then neglected, starved, left to struggle alone until influence for the cause was lost, are evidence. I can not believe that this is the New Testament way. I do not. A congregationalism so absolute as to make this possible is not Biblical.

What can be done in this matter in the Brethren church? Can the difficulty be overcome? Yes. Do you ask how? I can only give my opinion. No one else is responsible for this save myself. Let us plan. Our church as whole is already divided into districts. The very place to begin general supervision is the district. Each district should have a man—qualified in every way scripturally and educationally,—to be the *overseer* of every local congregation in the district. The duties of an Elder and Evangelist should be this man's duties. Every congregation in this man's district having a regular pastor would have little claim upon this Bishop, except that he should visit it once or twice a year in the interests of the church at large and to confirm and strengthen the work. But congregations large or small without pastors, should be under his immediate care. Churches losing their pastor's should come at once under his care. He should perform every duty that such cases impose. Hold regular services, maintain the cause of the Brethren, assist

in securing pastors, etc. in all such places under his care. Would such a man have enough to do in Ohio for example? Ask the congregations and mission points without pastors and preaching. Would he accomplish any good? Ask of the places where our cause is lost—places which with little judicious care and encouragement could have been saved. Could he be supported? His work would be largely self-supporting and each district could easily raise a fair compensation. Would it destroy our congregational rights? No. It would only bring each congregation to see its duty to the church at large. What opposition would come to this plan? That alone which strong congregations make—for I have yet a weak and struggling class to find who would not hail some such plan with joy. *But would it be scriptural?* Yes. I will undertake to prove it more scriptural than the careless, indifferent and extreme congregationalism which permits weak and struggling congregations to perish because no common tie binds the two, and on the plea of released obligation because of independence.

A Ministerial Qualification. What shall be the standard of qualification for admission to our ministry? The moral qualifications are explicitly expressed in the New Testament. From these no departure can be made. But these should be *more intensely emphasized* in every instance from this one. Let every candidate thoroughly prove himself here.

But what of educational qualifications? These, if any are necessary, have been almost entirely ignored by us in the past. Shall we set a higher standard? Oh, yes we must. Sooner or later we must do this. Why not now? The time demands it. The success of our fraternity depends upon it. Our ministry itself feels the need.

It is folly to say that our standard is as high as it should be. Incompetency in this day will not do. To receive persons into the ministry with absolutely no preparation for it proves disastrous to both congregation and minister. How can persons who lack even a good common school education meet the intelligence of the times? Some one even now is ready to say that such and such persons have no college training and yet are very successful. Granted. I talked not long since with a brother who is a true Christian minister, one who has done as much under God's hand as any minister we have

who declared that his lack of better training in school was a continual menace to his work. This very man—now in middle age is very seriously contemplating not less than a three year's course in Ashland University. What could this man not accomplish with a superior intellectual training?

How can one who has had no training in the Bible, is unacquainted with the first and fundamental principles of Christianity and who lacks general information, preach, and teach successfully a congregation possessed of general intelligence? It is hard to find even a small congregation where there are not graduates of high schools, colleges and Universities. No more express teaching is needed than II Tim. 2: 15. *Study.* Any young man who will be offended at this demand it seems to me is unfit for the calling of the ministry.

Our College. The foregoing gives me opportunity to speak of our college here at Ashland. We are striving to meet the demand for a better trained ministry by giving opportunity to pursue such a course of study here that will be adequate for the present requirement. Oh that our people would rally to the support of the college! I am not fanatical. My friends bear me witness that I am very conservative. But oh, that you, my dear brethren, could see the issues depending upon our success here. Will you not send your children to your own school? If we could have a hundred students at the opening of the term, Sept. 10, the whole church would be electrified. This is *YOUR* school. You should therefore patronize it. It is positively Christian in character. This is worth all else to you and your son or daughter. A young man in a letter to me recently said: "I am certainly coming back. I must thank you for your Christian influence over me last year. It stopped me in my waywardness."

How many congregations will send at least one student? But my space is filled up. I must close. I have only room to say that our coming conference has also an imperative duty to discharge toward our school.

J. A. MILLER.

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